

OBSERVATIONS

UPON THE

Conduct of the CLERGY,

In Relation to the

Thirty Nine Articles.

Wherein is shewed

That the CHURCH of ENGLAND, properly so call'd, is not now existing.

WITH AN

ESSAY

Towards a Real PROTESTANT
ESTABLISHMENT.

By ROBERT SEAGRAVE.

*Amicus Socrates, Amicus Plato, sed magis
Amica Veritas.*

L O N D O N :

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OBSERVATIONS

UPON THE

Conduct of the CLERGY,

&c.

THOUGH I must expect to meet with ample Censure from one particular Quarter, my Regard to the Protestant Interest, consider'd as Universal, and to the Principles of the original Reformation, has led me to prosecute an Enquiry into some modern *Concealments*; which, because of their Importance to the Laity, I am very well satisfy'd, ought to be *examin'd*, and *drawn forth* to publick Inspection.

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ACCORDING to such Ecclesiastical Laws, and Constitutions of this Kingdom, which the Clergy have procur'd to be establish'd, whether to bind themselves, or more properly others, let the Reader judge when he shall have attended the following Research, the Church professes *Thirty Nine Articles* of Religion. To these Articles every Ecclesiastical Person, truly as must be suppos'd, subscribes his *Assent*, and *Consent*.

How far the Demand of such Subscription may be just, or how far the doctrinal Articles are just, is not at present my Object. The Remark I beg Leave to make, and which every intelligent Person will see the Reasonableness of is this; these Strictures of Religion are either a Rule of teaching in this Church, or they are not a Rule. If they are not a Rule, what constitutes the Church of *England*? If they be a Rule, and a
Standard,

Standard, where must be grounded the Authority of modern Teaching, which is not only not agreeable to these Articles, but absolutely a contrary System? In Case by any After-Lights a Clergyman finds Cause to change his subscribing Opinion, (a Right I shall not dispute) and goes into different Schemes, why is not such Disagreement with his Rule publickly acknowledg'd, and the People advertis'd of the Difference? This Mystery of the Pulpit appears to me unfair with Respect to the People. They have no fix'd Sight of their Minister's Scheme. They can have no *Security*, no *Dependance* upon him, in *any* doctrinal Point whatsoever.

THE Conduct of a Minister ought never to be ambiguous, and disguis'd from Mankind. I should rather apprehend it should be the most ingenuous, and sacred thing in the World. Small Deviations from the Establish-

ment, and unessential, would call for no Remark; but it is observable, modern Preaching varies not only in some particular Points, it is a new Scheme built upon an opposite Foundation. Yet the People are not advertis'd, 'tis kept a Secret from them. A common Auditory hath not Skill in its self to discern the Difference. They hear, and receive without Suspicion in an implicit manner, according to the Scheme of the Age, which happens to be in Use. Possibly the Preacher himself may have taken it up without the exactest Examination, or having strictly compar'd it with such, which prevail'd before his Time; tho' 'tis generally Odds against any Tenets which arise from Custom, either in unlearned, or in learned Men.

WHATSOEVER high Opinion the World entertains of liberal Accomplishments, Learning may be a splendid Gift, yet is far from being the
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chief Requisite in a Divine : Many other might be mention'd of greater Importance to the Laity. Disinterestedness, and Sincerity, are preferable ; so is Experience in the Scriptures. Without these Learning is precarious in many respects, a guileful Amusement. An Academical Education falls short of the Advantages we usually attribute to it. It is seldom so conversant about Religion, as might be wish'd ; and when conversant, obnoxious to much partiality. Gentlemen in Universities are frequently learned but on one side of the Question. A Student in Roman Catholick Countrys applys himself to defend the definitive Council of *Trent*, and whole Roman System ; in *England*, the Philosophy, and Divinity of the Day, with the grand Episcopal System. On this Occasion Academicians are not so solicitous to find out any Error, or Defect in their Tenets, as how to maintain them with
Dexterity,

Dexterity, and Skill. They will step a little way into the Arguments of a contrary Party, in order to understand them for Confutation, seldom for Conviction. These letter'd Warriors rarely penetrate so deep into the Enemy's Quarters as to have any Man taken Prisoner. The Study of the Schools appears so precarious a matter, so embarrass'd with Subtilties, human Passions, human Prejudices, that it seldom answers, with respect to Religion, a valuable End. It is one thing to be educated in Divinity, another thing to be educated in Christianity. A Clergyman may easily be a Scholar, he may have read *Whitby*, *Pearson*, and the *Fathers*; but if he has not carefully read his *Bible*, and been conversant in the Pages which cannot misguide him, 'tis far from certain that he may be properly denominated a Christian Divine. A Person ought not to be esteem'd a Minister of God, meerly because
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because he was educated to the Ministry, or has had an Imposition of Episcopal Hands upon his Head, unless other Evidences attend his Deportment, to demonstrate this Point more strongly, and plainly. No Heresy yet, 'tis hoped, tho' possibly I seem to tread on the Confines of it.

AT Entrance into Holy Orders it appears somewhat wonderful, that seldom any Gentlemen recede from that Undertaking, on account of Scruples arising from the Terms of their Admission. We must be at a Loss to account for this Case, except from the Ministry's being generally engag'd in with a View to a Maintenance. This may suggest an Apology for several small mental Incompliances, yet cannot justify that Disagreement with the principal Articles which discovers its self to exact Observers in the Course of their Preaching ever after. However, the Subscription

scription stands: and may now be look'd upon as the Ground, on which our Ministers pass from one Order and Promotion to another. The Articles being read in the Congregation, they pronounce openly their full Assent. By and by they give into the Stream of our new Divinity, and cast the Articles behind their Backs. They actually oppose them, in a disguis'd manner. And call all Mankind Dissenters, except themselves, who happen to be really such in the most material Points. As thus, Out of the *Thirty Nine* Articles, there are only *Five*, on which our Reformers laid the Stress, and Substance of Protestantism. Most of the rest are no other than circumstantial, and external Matters. These *particular Five* the Clergy at present generally disbelieve, and reject; and are fallen upon a new Foundation. Consequently the literal or written Constitution of the Church of *England* is no more. But
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of this by and by. I shall not trouble the Reader with rehearsing these Calvinistical Articles, whereby the *British* Church agrees originally with every foreign Protestant Church ; but I shall give him the Substance of the matter, and the Difference between the *first* and the *new System*, in as distinct, and concise a View as conveniently I can.

MODERN Divinity may be defined a moral Scheme, taken up from the Time of Archbishop *Laud*, consisting in this Position, that a Christian's Eternal Happiness depends in the main on his own Endeavours, I say, on his own virtuous Endeavours. Sometimes Words may be dropt from the Pulpit seemingly of another Import, but such Words are very rare, and soon remov'd out of sight again by the moral Inculcation. Further, our Auditories are led to apprehend that Repentance, Faith and the like are

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attainable

attainable by the Exertion of a Person's natural Faculties, and Abilities. Whereas, our Articles hold the continual Necessity of supernatural Assistance on this Head, and that both Salvation and this Assistance proceed from the discriminating Favour of God *only*. Morality may be a very good thing in its place, but out of its place it is a very bad thing. When Morality is made to possess the place of Christ's Righteousness, imputable to us, instead of our own (for our own is constant Filthiness with respect to God, and when charg'd with so great an Office) it is absolutely a ruinous thing, an unhappy Deception, and the greatest Bar in the World to prevent a due Faith. Going about to establish their own Righteousness with a View to be sav'd by it, Men are ignorant of that new Righteousness which hath been form'd by the Council of God, alone adæquate to this End. Sin its self does not shut
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out so many from entering into the Kingdom of God, as human Righteousness misapply'd. Nature must submit to accept an entire new Cloathing, instead of its own Righteousness, which the Glory of God will not permit to have properly the least place in the matter: Afterwards indeed it must be look'd for, that is, amongst the Fruits, and Evidences of Faith, upon a Foot of Gratitude, and upon a Foot of glorifying God, who has really left us nothing more, nothing besides, to do. This Language formerly fill'd our Pulpits, (as universally, as the moral Scheme does now) and held out to an Audience a comfortable Light. This Language subsists at present amongst the Dissenters, which, I fear, may be part of the Reason, why the Clergy have left it, and given into a new Language.

To cast Man's Salvation upon Terms, and Conditions, instead of

free Grace, is properly no *Gospel* at all. It is the *Law* still. Nay, it brings with it more impracticable Terms than the *Mosaic* Law, because its Purity, and Precepts are more extensive, and refin'd. The *Gospel* would be very improperly glad Tidings were this the Case. Its excellent Morality was never design'd whereby Persons are to be sav'd, but it shews that Persons who have been sav'd by Christ, are wrought upon by his Grace, to produce such good Works. The grand Benefit of Christ is never experimentally receiv'd by any Man, till he submits to receive him freely. After this Morality may be introduc'd, and recommended, by a Preacher as much as he pleases, and I will add, ought too. Before, 'tis a ruinous Interposition, and a continual Bar cast in the very way.

THERE is no middle Way to immortal Happiness. No Medium between
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Merit, and free Grace, Our selves, or the *Messiah*. A Believer is not fav'd partly by himself, and partly by Christ to make up his Defects; but he is fav'd by the whole Satisfaction, and whole Morality of Christ set to him, instead of his own, before he was born into the World. Modern Preachers represent that Christians are fav'd by what Christ *will* do, and *will* accomplish, in case of certain Performances on their parts; the Old Divinity represents that a Christian is fav'd by what Christ *has* done, and *has* accomplish'd. The intelligent Reader will here discern a wide Difference; perhaps so wide, that one is believing, and the other no better than disbelieving. One holds Men in Bondage of Spirit, and Confusion, the other brings them into perfect Light. This old Scheme is undoubtedly the Scheme of the Articles, and the Intention of their Compilers, as appears by the concurrent Writings publish'd

publish'd in that Age, and indeed is the general Scheme of the whole Protestant Church abroad, in GERMANY, SWISSERLAND, FRANCE, HOLLAND.

IN the mean Time whatsoever be the Judgement, or Taste of the Reader upon this Head, which I beg leave to say may possibly arise much from Custom, one Point will admit of no Dispute; which is this, that Ecclesiastical Persons ought not to hold the constituent Parts of their Articles fast, and loose. If they do not think fit to preach pursuant to their own Subscription, the least they can do wou'd be to advertise the People of it. Otherwise there arises an inevitable Inference; how can an Audience depend upon such a Ministry in their doctrinal Deliveries of any kind? Very possibly they may satisfy themselves; but how can a People be satisfy'd with them? Can they rationally

nally expect Attention, Regard, and Revenues for Disguise, and Ambiguity? I shou'd be glad somebody wou'd demonstrate to me the moral Honesty of this Case.

THO' a publick Minister has a Right to differ from all the Protestant Churches in the World, he has no Right to be reserv'd, and evasive, about it. His Office requires him to be ingenuous, and explicit; otherwise an Auditory will never know where to fasten for Edification, and Establishment. They are at no Certainty. Amus'd they may be, but they cannot be really benefitted. Their Case will be that which the Scripture mentions, *Ever learning, and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*. Such Persons embrace just every thing, and nothing. Since Ministers engage upon a particular Plan, the People suppose that they continue to preach conformable

conformable to that Plan, and the Rudiments of their Church. The Engagements of common Life are interpreted in this manner; Articles of that Nature are usually understood in a grammatical Sense. Why must the Engagements of Ecclesiastical Persons carry no significance? Wherefore are they the only Order of Men in the World whom no common Ligatures must be expected to hold?

It is observable, we have one Article merely of an external Nature and circumstantial in Religion, of which, with the Dominion and Profits arising from it, the Clergy are sufficiently tenacious. They adhere readily to the grammatical Sense of Words under that Head, which establishes Episcopacy, Priests, and Deacons. The Sense of this Article is plain with them, and obvious. They may defy Mankind to tax them with Ambiguity, or Instability, touching
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the Paragraphs which promote their Interest. These, from a Principle of Duty to the Church, and tender Regard to their Successors, they will maintain with all Firmness, and Resolution. It appears to me, they labour more about the Externals of the Church, than the Internals. They keep the Outside of the Cup clean, in some Measure, when as the Inside wou'd be more considerable, and momentous. The Church of *England* was made internally clean by the care of our Reformers, but the Dust is blown about it again.

OUR Clergy are sufficiently intent upon the Authority of the Church, and Priesthood. I am sorry it happens so, this Sollicitude keeps an exact Parallel with that of the *Romish* Clergy. In Papal Countries a Person may with more safety be an Heretic against Truths of Scripture, than against the Commandments, and Tra-

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ditions of Men. They never forgive the least shaking of the Chair: to question CONSTANTINE'S Patrimony, or the Rights, and Immunities of *Holy Church* is execrable Heresy!

So in *Britain* we frequently perceive our Ministers exceeding watchful to take the Alarm, which threatens their Authority, or Revenues. When they descry any Incidents that bear the least Aspect that way, they are immediately in Perils amongst false Brethren. Anarchy and Confusion are at Hand. At some critical Juncture even Popery itself gains ground daily, and invades our Borders, tho' the Juncture over, both the Cry and the Sollicitude cease at once. Ecclesiastical Authority is so tender a Ward with these Gentlemen, that rather than endanger the least part of it, a known Ecclesiastical Abuse, and public Grievance shall not be reform'd, and regulated, lest it shou'd
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shake the Pillars. I greatly suspect that the favourite Cry of Infidelity, so much at present the Topic of public Declamation contains in it a large measure of Artifice. Several Unbelievers always were, and will be, yet nothing resembling the Number suggested. Neither do I take their Case to be duly understood, and represented. The Term Infidel will either fit many more than it is apply'd to, or not so many. 'Tis generally a commodious Subject, insinuating the Clergy's peculiar Stedfastness, and Orthodoxy, and drawing to themselves a popular Attachment at all adventures. It has too much the Appearance of a Phantom, dress'd up with the same View, and to answer the same End, with the Term Heretic in the Mouth of the Roman Clergy. How far they would gladly carry this Term, and apply the Disadvantage of its Idea, appears remarkably from the Weekly Publications of

reverend Divine, by whom Infidels and *Dissenters*, Infidels and *Seſtaries*, are frequently rang'd together, with great Significance, and Dexterity. Without retorting upon this Occaſion I conceive this a pregnant Proof, that the Clergy are not altogether Strangers either to Artifice, or Reſentment.

It may be no improbable Conjecture, that theſe Gentlemen carry in their Eye the Temperament of the Prince, and People, where Time and Circumſtances place them. When Princes ſit upon the Throne who diſcover a Diſpoſition to favour their exorbitant Claims, in order effectually to demolish their Opponents, and *Dissenters*, they mark them continually with the Brand of ſeditious and antimonarchical Principles. Both Church and State are by means of them in extreme Danger. On the other Hand, when a Prince, or
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House of Princes arises, whose Maxims free them from every Imputation of Bigotry, and under whom the Rights, and Liberties of Mankind begin to be well understood, in such Reigns the good People are the Engine apply'd to, and Infidelity becomes the favourite Alarm. I apprehend this declamatory Complaint to be true in some Instances; in the manner generally represented, not true: I cannot help remarking upon this Head, that the Arguments made use of at present against Infidels are too much of a kind with their own, to meet with the desir'd Success. The Cry appears calculated to affect the Superstition of the Multitude, in behalf of they know not what; and to secure to themselves the Chair of Authority, and Orthodoxy. Here lies great part of the Sollicitude. Otherwise why do not we see our Pulpits as assiduously exercis'd, and an equal Zeal, in behalf of the Reformation, in behalf

half of civil and religious Liberty, in behalf of Sincerity, Morality, and consciencious Practices amongst all Orders of Men whatsoever? These Gentlemen seem equally skilful at an Outcry, and at Silence.

I MUST now beg Leave to make some small Remarks, in relation to the *Canons*; because of the Affinity they bear to my present Subject, and close Connection with it. The *Canons* may be reckon'd a part of our Ecclesiastical Constitution, tho' I think the less considerable part. They were intended for the external Government of the Church, and to maintain Order; at least this was the plea. So far as these affect Persons, who agree to the erecting such a Jurisdiction, I object nothing: Tho' I must confess my self at a loss to apprehend how this coercive Jurisdiction came by a Right of fixing itself upon the whole Kingdom. But let us see how

how these Canons are observ'd. Do they answer the End propos'd? Do the Clergy themselves shew an exemplary Conformity to them? Not many, it must be own'd, where Connivance, or a Dispensation can be obtain'd to the contrary. Neither do they administer much Inconvenience to Persons of Rank, and Station. Indeed when this Spider's Web seizes a powerless Sinner, he shall be entangled sufficiently, and not be extricated, whilst a Drop of Blood remains in his Body. The Gentlemen of the Tippet are so consciencious in their Office, that their Piety and Zeal prompt them to purge away Vice in every shape; unless a Commutation of Pennance happens to be obtain'd by the humble Submission of a few Pence. In Case there be any thing not perfectly laudable in these Proceedings, and certain Courts of Judicature amongst us are solely in the Fault, whence comes it, that the Re-
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form, and Regulation of them meets with constant Opposition from a particular Quarter?

THE Jurisdiction either under-acts itself, or over-acts itself. It is the Opinion of many Persons, that this Species of Law might well be spar'd amongst us, and that the common Law of the Kingdom wou'd answer every desirable Purpose. It certainly appears in the impolitic Light of being an Empire within an Empire. Some of the compulsive Sanctions, relating to Church-Conformity, are already set aside, with just Reason, by the *Act of Toleration*. The rest continue in Force, and are sometimes put in Execution. By which the Populace of Mankind are put under Saws, and under Harrows, whilst Ecclesiastical Persons themselves do not choose to touch them with the Tip of their Fingers. When any Inconvenience, or Obstacle, arises from
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this Quarter to the Clergy, in Case by Strength of Interest they can procure a Dispensation, the Conscience of a Canon finds Weight with very few. I know but one secure from all Infringement, which is the Canon (72^d, latter part) that prohibits their casting out any Devil, or Devils, without *Licence* of the Ordinary. I apprehend the matter here to be pretty safe, perhaps equally without a Licence, and with one.

THE Practice of Indulgences, and Dispensations, plainly evinces, that the Clergy themselves do not esteem the canonical Establishment *sacred* in its own Nature. Such an Appointment, which only binds those Persons, who are destitute of an Opportunity of evading it, is held sacred in effect by no Persons at all. 'Tis an Intimation that Mankind esteems the whole a Coercion from the beginning. Civil coercive Power every

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body allows a necessary Appointment. But in Religion whatsoever is mechanical is vain. And indeed there is properly no Authority of any kind over Christians, as such, except that of holy Scripture. All the rest must arise from voluntary Consent, or be unwarrantable.

AT the Reformation in *Germany*, when *Luther* observed the frequency of Indulgences, and Dispensations in the Church of *Rome*, and Commutations of Pennance for Money (which is no Pennance at all) it suggested to him his first Argument against the Papal Power. *Luther* suspected, and argu'd rightly, that such a *changeable* System cou'd not possibly have any Foundation in Scripture.

INDEED the Gospel was asserted at the Reformation, both abroad and in *Britain*, to be in itself a sufficient Rule of Faith, and Manners. If Protestants
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wou'd abide by this Point steadily, we certainly stand in need of no other Rule. Nor do I see how to avoid acknowledging that to bind upon Mankind so bulky an Establishment, as that of the Church of *England*, by Force, must be esteem'd an unwarrantable Step, and which carries in it a large Measure of Imposition. By Consequence, every sensible Man must endeavour the Removal of it; that is, so far as the Prejudices, and Foibles of Mankind will admit. Perhaps the Reader conceives Surprize at such a Confession from an Author so particularly related to the Church as my self. I can only answer that I value *Consistency* more than *Party*, and wou'd not willingly suffer Interest to pervert either my Judgment, or Integrity.

It appears to me an unwarrantable Incident attending Society, and one of the many grand Vanities in it, that

Persons who shake off the Yoke of Others, still incline to impose a Yoke, and dictate, in their Turn. 'Tis an Evil in commom Life, which in spiritual Life rises to an infinitely higher Inconvenience. It cannot be deny'd that *Ecclesiastical* Governors in all Ages have been greatly criminal on this Head. What abject Slavery of Mind, and Stupidity, has it necessarily bred in the inferior Classes of Mankind! What Strife, Envy, and Confusion amongst the Dictators themselves! How long did the rival Churches of *Constantinople* and *Rome* contend for an Empire, which belong'd to neither, and which each in their Turn affirm'd to be Anti-christian! By and by Ecclesiasticks unhappily forget. The Authority, by changing Hands, becomes just, and did not the Prudence of secular Princes interpose, its Exercise wou'd know no End. 'Tis too probable they wou'd be eternally finding out Occasions,

fions, and Opportunities of gratifying this restless Humour, this secret little Pride of human Nature, by fresh Appointments; tho' I will answer for it they can never mend the Gospel.

COERCIVE Power never answer'd an End in the Church, except of Tyranny, and whereby has been produc'd great Uniformity in Ignorance. In Religion whatsoever rises mechanically carries no Value in it, all shou'd be rational and free. Human Determinations, and Appointments may possibly be well meant, but they are injurious to the Gospel. They produce Stupidity instead of Truth, Sourness and Superstition, instead of Candor, Piety, and Humanity.

WE are now come to the Issue of my Argument. When in any Kingdom there appears a total Departure both from Doctrine, and canonical Conformity, the Church of that Kingdom

Kingdom (consider'd as an Human Establishment) cannot be said to exist any longer. The Vanity of that Ground evidences itself to all Mankind. They who trusted under its Wings find nothing in it. That is to say, a Discernment of this Nature is obvious to that part of Mankind, who make use of their Understanding, and who dare abide such a Discernment without panick Apprehensions. I mean not that all Religion, and Christianity are at an End by this Incident. Religion may happen to be left behind, and thrive the better for being disentangl'd. The more Religion becomes disentangl'd from human Devices, the more it stands in its natural Liberty. The more Liberty, the more Religion, true voluntary Religion. As to any other, it bears no value in my Estimation. Cou'd religious Liberty exist in the World to the utmost, (notwithstanding the idle Apprehensions of many) the happier wou'd

wou'd be its Situation in every rational View. But to the Point, to which this Digression has been preparatory. I wou'd not willingly assert by way of Paradox, or Singularity, but I think that in Propriety of Speech the peculiar Church of *England* has not *at present* a Being. The *Thirty Nine* Articles were its chief Constitution. In Consequence of the *Arminian* or new Scheme introduc'd by Archbishop *Laud*, which the Clergy have universally thought fit to adopt, these Articles are superseded, and the Essence or Constitution which form'd the Church, plainly annihilated, and gone. The Clergy may call it a Church still, if they please, but not the Church of *England*. They have taken a new constitutional Scheme, which makes properly a new Church. Whether for the better, or otherwise, is not the Point of Light which at present I view it in.

AN House fallen to decay may be denominated nevertheless the same House; fallen to Ruin, and rebuilt upon the same Foundation, we still esteem it the same House: rebuilt upon another Foundation, it is not the same, but another. The original Foundation of our Church was Calvinism, professing eternal Life not in any measure the Result of human Righteousness, but of Christ's Righteousness, and asserting Faith with other Virtues never the Result of Man's Ability, but of supernatural Assistance. Whilst the Church of *England* continu'd upon this general Protestant Foundation, tho' it might fail in the Execution of its Canons, and fall into the most ruinous Irregularities, it might still be denominated the same Church; but in regard its Ministry have withdrawn this Foundation, and substituted in its Room a mere moral one, it is effectually another Object. They who receive Ecclesiastical

Ecclesiastical Revenues are not at present the Ministry of the Church of *England*.

POSSIBLY some will reply, the Ecclesiastical Constitution remains, tho' in a manner disregarded, and dead. I answer, it remains in Writing but not in Fact; what signify the Articles to remain in Writing if they are not believ'd? So did the common Laws of the Land, and *Magna Charta* exist in Parchment, under the Reign of King *James* the 2d, yet it is agreed on all Hands that the civil Constitution was subverted. What King *James* was oblig'd to maintain by his Coronation-Oath, our Clergy stand oblig'd to maintain by their Subscriptions. Shou'd it be argu'd they have chang'd their Sentiments, and perhaps discover'd a better Foundation of Doctrine to go upon, and consequently ought to follow the better, without the Imputation of a Crime; every

Gentleman's Right of judging I never dispute; but I answer, possibly the Prince just mention'd might esteem himself bound in Conscience not to look upon the Laws as a Rule to him of Government. Yet the Nation is concern'd in these Incidents in a different Light. The People have a Right not to be treated in so precarious a Manner. A Latitude of this kind takes away from them all *Security*, and *Dependance*, all *Confidence* in a Guide, be he civil or spiritual. They become oblig'd to look out for a proper Remedy of the Evil.

AGAIN King *James* never expressly declar'd (that I know) that the Laws of the Land were not *his* Rule of Government. In like manner shou'd Mankind wait 'till the Clergy *declare* their Disagreement with the principal Articles, they may wait possibly to the End of the World. Yet this is so far from being a Reason why the
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Public shou'd not give Attention to this Point, that the Reason is stronger why they shou'd attend it.

INDEED many Persons, that is to say, the many do not suddenly take in Representations on this Head. Ecclesiastical Failures may happen; yet pass unobserv'd a long Time, thro' Mankind's innate Liableness to be amus'd with any Species of Doctrine, which appears plausible, and well ornamented. A civil Incident affects a Nation at once, on account of its Reference to their temporal Properties: But unhappily Mankind are not always so discerning in spiritual Points. Looking into History we find tedious Tracts of Years necessary to elucidate Ecclesiastical Collusions. And whosoever attempts to forward such Elucidations must prepare to meet various Disadvantages with respect to himself. Ecclesiastical Persons, being generally quick of Pene-

tration, see an Evil which threatens 'em betimes. And they militate against any Revolution with a Soldiery of that very Multitude on their side, for whose sake the War was attempted. Nevertheless, soon as the Periods of Time are ripe, Truth ever prevails, and the Rights of Mankind take their *due* Establishment.

THO' I seem to speak in Strains of Hostility, it may be safely understood, that the Species of Revolution I have in view may be effected without the least Violence, or Injury to any Persons. I am not such a Knight-Er-rant as to meditate the Demolition of Principalities, and Powers. I offer Reasons, pursuant to Conviction, why the Laity ought not to be dependant on any particular Order of Ministers, either in Conscience or Purse, further than they have Opinion of such Ministers. There ought to be a Remedy

dy against Deception, and Irregularity.

THIS brings me to explain, and describe, what I take to be a real Protestant Establishment. If my Idea of this Point be rational, the Laity, both Dissenters and of our own Church, may soon be admitted to a very natural Remedy. One single Act of the Legislature is capable of setting the whole matter right. The Reformation, it may be recollected, at first setting out, acknowledg'd the *Scriptures* to be the *only Rule of Faith, and Manners*. If this Truth cou'd be held steadily, there wou'd really be no propriety of place for any farther Establishment than the *Scriptures* themselves. Possibly every thing additional, and human, if examin'd might be found unprotestant. But I shall not insist upon this any farther than to insinuate, that I do not greatly admire any positive Establishment
whatsoever.

whatsoever. The Establishment therefore I mean, as Circumstances stand, is a negative Establishment. In case Mankind must have an appointment of this kind, it ought never to be so circumstanced, as to injure the Right of private Judgment, or the Consequences of that Right in any shape.

By the favour of weak Princes the Church has inadvertently assum'd a power of shutting out, at once from the Kingdom of God, and from the Kingdom of Men : an Assumption so groundless in itself, and such an In-croachment upon the secular Power, as well as upon those who are under the Protection of that secular Power, that I humbly think the Representatives of a just and free People can never come into a wiser measure, than by a solemn Act to repeal at once the **EXCLUSIVE** Parts of our Establishment. The other Parts might stand and welcome. Now here wou'd
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be no Injustice to the Church (as I shall demonstrate by and by) yet Justice to the Laity in general, who are free, and ought to be free in their religious Choice without Embarrassments. By such a general Repeal of our exclusive Sanctions, the Nation wou'd enjoy religious Liberty, in the same manner and degree as it does already civil Liberty. This Affair does not regard Protestant Dissenters only, it regards all Men whatsoever, who ought to be left under such a Situation, with respect to the Church, as to be under no Snares and Temptations. I do not think the *Toleration Act* (tho' a very good Acquisition) sufficiently proportion'd to this view. The *Toleration Act* is barely a Suspension of the Laws. Why may not such Laws themselves with the same Equity be repeal'd? To suspend them only keeps the Wound unhealed; it must still bleed either outwardly or inwardly.

wardly. A temporary Remedy may give some ease (as the *Act* now before me expresses itself) the Scheme I am representing might give *total* Ease. It wou'd be adæquate to the Evil, by reaching the bottom of it.

WHILST a Dissent from the Establishment is tolerated merely, it leaves a lurking Perswasion in the minds of the Populace, that the thing itself is an Infringement upon the Prerogatives of the Church, and shou'd be retracted with the first opportunity. Whereas I apprehend it ought to stand in such a light which might cause it to be look'd upon, not as matter of Favour and Indulgence, but as matter of strict Right. It shou'd not be distinguished in this respect from other religious Communities.

WE ought to make a wide Difference between Civil Authority and Eccle-

Ecclesiastical. The civil Authority of a Kingdom comprehends universally all Persons born in it. But this is not the Case of the Ecclesiastical. That reaches, and comprehends only every Person who agrees to it. Unless you will assert coercive Power, there can be no Medium. Consider'd in a religious Capacity no one Person should determine another otherwise than by Consent. An Assembly of Ecclesiastics can judge for themselves, but consistently with true Protestant Principles, they cannot judge for any one Man besides. They have no Right to judge, nor consequently, to determine and enact for themselves and for others too; much less for a whole National People at once.

It shou'd carefully be remember'd, that at the Reformation we separated from the Church of Rome, not only on account of false, and idolatrous

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trous Doctrines, but on account of usurp'd Authority. In what Sense was this an usurp'd Authority ? Certainly not altogether because *foreign*, but because it was an *human* Authority, substituted in the place of the Scriptures. Our Divines constantly pleaded the *sole* Authority of Scripture, when the *Italian* Jurisdiction was to be discarded, why then did they end the Reformation with erecting a *British* one ? If an human Jurisdiction be unjust, as such, 'tis equally unjust whether imported from abroad, or fabricated nearer home.

THE Right of private Judgment was the very *Basis* of the Reformation, whatsoever mistaken Turn it afterwards took. As every Man in the Kingdom was acknowledg'd to be free at that Time, with respect to his religious Capacity, they shou'd have continu'd so. Mankind shou'd have been permitted then, and shou'd now be permitted,

mitted, to arrange themselves in whatsoever religious Societies they think fit, without the least Envy, or Disadvantage: provided always they give proper Security to the civil Magistrate, of their due Subjection and Allegiance. This I apprehend shou'd be the only *Test* in a Protestant Country. Any other Test carries an Inconsistency with first Principles, and instead of keeping down Divisions, has a direct Tendency to keep them up to the end of the World.

THE *Test Act* was intended against *Popish Recusants*; who are incapable of giving the Government proper Security for their Allegiance. So far as the Edge of this Law has been turn'd against Protestant Dissenters, 'tis unjust in every Shape. By this means the Holy Sacrament is made not only an Engine of State, but an Engine of mere Party, and Revenge. No Clergyman of Character will openly

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defend

defend this unhappy Prostitution, yet Opposition to its being remov'd springs from that Quarter. Shou'd Interest prevail against Piety? Methinks there is a Class of Persons in the World, that never seem to be for a bad thing, yet rarely are a for good one. I must intreat every worthy Clergyman, and I do it here once for all, not to take Offence at this or any other Passage. He is not in the Satire. I shou'd be glad to be mistaken, but I have always been of Opinion, that when ever any important Reform happens, it must be a Lay-Wind that blows it.

THE political Iniquity of the *Test Act* appears in the following Light. 'Tis an arbitrary Exclusion from civil Privileges on a religious Account. The Establishment by this means lays under a disadvantageous Situation, and marks with a Brand of Infamy, a part of his Majesty's Subjects, who
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have just the same Right to refuse the Sacrament in the Church of *England*, as the Church of *England* wou'd have to refuse the Sacrament in any Church of the Dissenters. 'Tis in effect telling Mankind, indeed they shall judge for themselves; but if they do not think and judge as we do, they shall suffer for it, and be turn'd out of the House. We shou'd not allow a Right with one Hand, and take it away with the other.

WITH REGARD to the Safety of the Government from Persons disapproving the Communion of the Church; that point the Prince only has to do with, and the Legislature. In Case a Test can be found of a secular Kind, adæquate to that purpose, as certainly there may, to draw religious Controversies into the Question is altogether foreign. This latter makes the Safety propos'd by it (if I am not mistaken) not so properly the Safety of the Prince,

Prince, or Monarchy, as the Safety of the Clergy, and Hierarchy, in their Authority and Acquisitions. Otherwise the Oath of Supremacy and Allegiance wou'd be sufficient; 'tis the only Test the Occasion naturally calls for.

I AM aware that an Objection usually arises on the present Subject, that the Dissenters entertain rebellious Principles, and that the Oath of Allegiance wou'd afford no Security from their Attempts. I answer, if their Oath cannot be depended upon, neither can the Sacrament. The Objection derives itself from the unhappy Annals of *Charles* the 1st. Now if Gentlemen call all public Resistance, and all appearing in Arms, Rebellion, it may be as properly enquir'd, who resisted Princes and who rebell'd at the Revolution? There appears little or no Difference in the Actions of Mankind when they fall under

der Oppression or any other Likeness of Situation. 'Tis well known the Dissenters are affectionately and steadily attach'd to Princes, who make the Rights of Mankind the measure of their Government. They can ever be depended upon, where Administrations are just and honourable; which possibly is more than can be affirm'd of many others. There are Persons in the World who secretly esteem a Royal Family the less for preserving inviolably Human Rights; who are constantly offering Incense to the Memory of such Reigns, whose Principles were arbitrary, and superstitious. The present Royal Family must never expect to become their real Admiration.

BUT to proceed more directly in my Argument. The civil Magistrate is not oblig'd to interest himself in religious Partys, so as particularly to espouse either the One, or the Other. He
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is not oblig'd to make one Party feel the Weight of his Arm, in mere Complaisance to their Opponents. This were Partiality in the utmost Propriety of the Word, and a Debasement of Majesty. There have indeed been known in former Periods Princes of this easy and inadvertent Disposition. Ecclesiastical Persons complemented the Throne with arbitrary Power, to receive in Return a Latitude of the same Kind in Matters spiritual. *Britain* at present can happily congratulate itself on a Prospect of Monarchs of quite another Dignity, and Discernment. It seems the Wisdom of Magistrates to discriminate with Places of Power, or Trust, in proportion to the *Merit* of Partys, consider'd in a *civil* Respect.

AGAIN. Were the Avenues of Power, and Trust, laid open, I by no means see any inevitable Consequence, that the Dissenters will immediately,

mediately, or always, possess them. The Prince upon the Throne wou'd still retain his Liberty. He might still shut out, or take in, proportionally as the Department of Persons might give him Cause. The Consequence from such a Situation of things (instead of that which the Friends of the Church seem to dread) wou'd only be to lay all Partys under stronger Obligations of Dutifulness, and Respect. The chief Strife would be who shou'd be *most* respectful.

By the *restrictive* Laws now in being, the King is evidently necessitated in his Choice; a Necessity equally injurious to Majesty, and the Public. I wou'd be understood not to be arguing here the Repeal of the *Test Act* particularly, or of any other Act of the same Nature, which, in Regard of vulgar Prejudice it may be difficult to effect: possibly the Scheme I am representing, being more out
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of the Way, and Track of vulgar Prejudice, might be effected with less Difficulty, and Clamour, tho' infinitely more adæquate to the purpose. If by one Exertion of legislative Authority the Exclusions of the Establishment were repeal'd, and abolish'd accumulately, the several Enactings of arbitrary Reigns, and of unwarrantable spiritual Authority, all fall and cease in course. They wou'd pass away in a manner unobserv'd, and no long Tract of Time be requisite to give the Nation a Posture of Tranquility, and Union.

LIBERTY is an Object always worthy the Attention of Protestants, cou'd it be obtain'd even to a *consummate* Degree. Of all arbitrary Power, 'tis well known, the spiritual has kept its Ground longest, and most of any. Tho' at Seasons this Evil may seem to disappear, perhaps now disappears, 'tis only smother'd under the

the Ashes, to revive at the least favourable Breath, that shall blow upon it. Shou'd Princes less friendly to Liberty, than his present Majesty, shou'd Princes less discerning than the HOUSE OF HANOVER arise in some future Period; all *Britain* has no Defence, no Safeguard, besides a mere Toleration, and bare Suspension of the Laws. It may be consider'd the Revolution is not yet complete. We may have *Schism Bills* again, and all the Purchase and Toil of many Years be yet demolish'd in a Day.

WHILST the Seeds of Danger remain, *Britain* can never be safe. The Body indeed of spiritual Tyranny is dead, but with too many the Spirit is still alive, and hovering o'er the dear Remains, longs to be re-united. It is remarkable, notwithstanding the *Toleration Act*, the *Act of Uniformity*, which compels every Layman whatsoever to use the Worship of the

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Church,

Church, under Pains and Penalties, still keeps its place in the Front of the Liturgy. So do the twelve fulminating Canons, which denounce Excommunication on every Person who shall presume in any Instance, or Respect, to disapprove the Ecclesiastical Establishment, still keep their place in the Body of the Canons. They are even the first in that Rank, and continually charg'd too, tho' their Mouths are stopt for the present. From these Mankind can never be safe, 'till totally remov'd out of the Reach of 'em. If we really esteem these Sanctions Tyranny, why are they left standing? Wise Nations do not leave Castles, and Forts, in suspicious Hands.

THIS Reasoning for abolishing certain Parts of our Establishment, drawn from political Maxims, and the Rights of Mankind, cannot, I think, be refuted: But it takes a new
Force

Force from the Conduct of the Clergy. They have in Effect disengag'd themselves both from Canons, and Articles; which offers a just Argument for the Laity to be disengag'd too. From what they have withdrawn themselves secretly, the Laity shou'd be withdrawn publicly. 'Tis Time to set that Door open, which ought never to have been shut. Still Mankind may go out at this Door, or stay in, pursuant to the Perswasion of their own Minds; for I am not for forcing them even to be free. Christian Liberty may be consistent with an Establishment, provided it be form'd by Consent, and in a Manner not exclusive of others, from civil Protection, and from an equal Claim of being esteem'd Christians. It wou'd be consistent, offer'd in a Way of *Proposition*; *Imposition* quite alters the Case. In this Light it must be consider'd as a Grievance, the Daughter of Pride, and Mother of all Bigotry.

gotry. Persons may, and I think, ought to comply with many things for Peace and Charity's sake. It is again a true, a wise Man may not comply, in order to preserve that Liberty from being incroach'd upon, which gives Worth and Value to every thing : In civil Life much, in religious Life the whole Value. To necessitate Men in their Choice is altogether an human Device, a Power which the Gospel itself never uses, a Power Ecclesiasticks make no Scruple to be excused from, indeed, which human Nature in general is incapable of admitting, tho' the Nature of some, thro' Interest or ill-judg'd Zeal, shou'd ever so much insist upon it. To think of circumscribing Men's Opinions by an Act of Uniformity is not at all less vain than to enact an Uniformity of Faces and Features. There are many, very many Persons in the World, who from a pernicious Notion of Confusion

fusion set themselves up to be wiser than Nature ; a Wisdom always false and ruinous.

WHY may not the Laity dissent with the same Lawfulness from the Clergy, as the Clergy dissent from one another, nay further, from themselves ? If Mankind has a Right to think at all, they must have a Right to think differently, and shou'd be supported in it.

IT seems also to me a Consequence of human Right, that Mankind may not be obliged to maintain a Ministry they approve not. Each Ministry has a just Title to Maintenance from it's proper Community ; but that other Communities shou'd contribute to their Revenues, no strict Justice can be pleaded, except the positive Institution of the Law. Revenues of this kind, besides a bad Foundation, tend to various Negligence,

gence, and Abuse. I wou'd beg leave under this Head to offer a Query, whether it might not be possible to find some Equivalent for all *personal* and *domestic* Tythes. That Ministers shou'd have a Demand of Tythes where from Judgment no Use is made of them, that is, shou'd receive Something for Nothing, is at present an unprotestant Part of our Establishment. No Man being born a Subject of the Church, they who have a Right to be spiritually free, have equally a Right to be temporally free. Any gratuitous Offering my Argument does not affect. Measures of Coercion, or any Measures beside what proceed upon Liberty, in a Protestant Country, howsoever they may be meant, tend naturally to Abuse and Superstition.

THE Benefits to arise from repealing the Exclusive Parts of our Establishment, in order to place all Protestants

testants upon a Foot of Equality with respect to one another, and of Independance with respect to the Clergy, wou'd be these, the Removal of *three* National Evils, *Animosity*, *Bigotry* and *Superstition*. If these be Evils, Nobody can properly object to the Removal of them.

THE Animosity of Parties has in all Reigns deriv'd incredible Damage upon the *British* State. Where civil Strife has slain its Thousands, religious Strife has slain its ten Thousands; or been dispos'd so to do. So long as the Distinction is kept up, that one part of the Nation are the Church, and the rest Schismatics and Sectaries, it is impossible to find out, even by Study, a more fruitful Ground of Division, Resentment, Envy. The Notion of Church-preheminence, and Superiority, floats so agreeably on the surface of popular Minds, that with many 'tis the Main

of their Religion. Hence the Idea of a Dissenter usually teams with contempt, and in the lowest Class of People with some Measure of Abhorrence. And well it may, when the Clergy range things in this Order for their Example. [See Weekly Miscellany, Friday *June 23*, 1738. *Presbyterian, Independant, Anabaptist*, with twenty Species BESIDES of *Heretics* and *Enthusiasts*.] Whenever this old Leaven receives proper Agitation, and the Ecclesiastical Ferment is wrought to a pitch, the Nation has frequently been cast into a general Fever, and the State scarce escap'd the Flame. Whereas, were the Distinction itself abolish'd, and Superiority and Inferiority removed out of sight, these truly fanatic Com-motions wou'd cease, as Effects cease with their Cause. It wou'd not require a longer Tract of Time than one Generation, to find the Laity sociable, and friendly. The next Generation

neration wou'd not know wherefore to be otherwise. 'Till this Equality takes place, we may see tolerable Intervals but no settled Composure.

It is a known Observation, that *Britain* is the most divided Kingdom of any in *Europe*. He who sits down to weigh this Point attentively will find, that in no other Kingdom the Subjects stand upon an unequal Foot. In *France*, and *Spain*, the State considers all its Subjects with the same Eye. Struggles sometimes happen amongst their Nobility, but the Populace are not divided into Factions. Tracts remoter than these are still unanimous. Ev'n in *Holland*, whose Circumstances resemble those of *Britain* the nearest of any, the Establishment of this wise Republic excludes (if I am not misinform'd) none except Roman Catholics. I submit it whether the Singularity of our *exclusive Sanctions* does not let

us into the true Source of that public Unhappiness so continually our Complaint.

BIGOTRY is not peculiar to our Climate, being the Produce of every Soil. This lazy Foible consists in an Attachment to Persons instead of things. To believe as the Church believes, saves human Nature so much Labour, and Application, and is so compendious a Way, that the Bulk of Mankind chuse much to tread in it. Having no Learning themselves they generally over-rate this surprising Gift in others, whilst it gives the Pulpit a Species of Infallibility. They think the Minister shou'd know best, and that he seldom errs in the Pulpit, howsoever he may err out of it. Now (not to detract a Grain from any Gentleman's Merits) 'tis to be fear'd great part of this Perswasion arises from mere external Circumstances. *Prejudice* bears a part in it;
Pomp,

Pomp, Shew, and ev'n the ministerial Habit contributes not a little. Not that we read either of *Pomp, Shew* or *Habit* amongst the Scripture Clergy. These Decencies, as they are artfully call'd, are too apt to beguile the Populace of their Passions, and Affections. As *infidel* a World as some Persons represent it, there is still more *Bigotry* in it, than Mankind readily apprehends. A Legislature need have no Disrespect to the Clergy, and yet judge it very convenient that the People under their Care shou'd be enabled to see things in a just Light; and that Ministers of the Gospel shou'd stand, and remain solely upon the Gospel. Truth may gain Profelytes, and the Deportment of Men may gain Respect, but the Gospel is a Stranger equally to *Force*, or *Art*.

SUPERSTITION is another Evil, which Mankind in some Measure might

might be enabled to avoid. The same Act which wou'd enlarge their Persons, wou'd enlarge their Minds. Now Superstition embraces the *Ceremonies*, and *Trappings* of Religion, instead of the *Substance*. When this specious Phantom, and shallow Infirmary will be entirely chas'd out of the World I cannot affirm. But I beg leave to affirm, that Nations are not oblig'd to lend the Infirmary all manner of Accommodations for its Use. The Custom of numerous Ceremonies may be just in States, where Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion; but not in those, where Knowledge shou'd be suppos'd to have that Office, and who profess the *Purity* of the Gospel.

WHENCE comes it, except from a corrupt Interest, or very erroneous Zeal, that the Idea of a *Puritan* is become amongst us a reproachful Character? Strange, that what was
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part of the Excellency of the Reformation shou'd now be esteem'd a Crime! External Amusements in religious Worship attract our Pity, and Complaint, or possibly we smile at 'em, consider'd in the Regions of Popery; in another Region they obtain the gentle Appellation of Significancy, and Decency. We see in our Churches of late Years even an Increase of these Amusements. How can a Protestant Church creep and pant so after all the Pageantry of Popery, if it really aims at a spiritual Object, and not Superstition! Tho' the Dominion of Popery, 'tis not likely we shall ever fall under again, we seem relapsing into the Vanities of it apace. Mankind are too apt in themselves to hang upon the Outside of Religion, to have these resting-places thrown out to them for the purpose. With Submission I apprehend our Ministers shou'd endeavour to undeceive them in these Points,

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and instruct them in every higher Attainment. Instead of which Instruction our Pulpits generally go upon a favourite Topic, and upon Declamation, insomuch that at present it may too justly be said that there is not a great deal, except Outside, and Form, left in the Church.

AND now can Mankind be so assuming as to think this particular Church the *only* valid Communion, and to have the only valid Ordinances, and that probably there is not any competent Worship amongst Dissenters? Howsoever excellent our Church of *England* may be, 'tis a great Error to exclude Others from Validity. All Protestants have an equal Right to their Persuasion, and if their Churches belong to Christ they are certainly valid Churches. If *many* chuse a Church, built due East and West; If *many* cannot esteem public Prayers significant with-

without a Surplice, or Sermon significant without a Gown, let these possess and enjoy their establish'd Method. But *Others* also shou'd be deem'd Christians, tho' their Churches are not erected by the Compass, tho' they pray without a Surplice, and their Sermons are deliver'd without a Gown. Superstition may eye these Externals, but Christianity is not concern'd in them.

TRUE Christians, use what Communion they will, are all of one Communion, and one Church. The Church of Christ is always one, tho' the Manner and Form of it may be greatly various. Every Protestant Church in this Kingdom, and in all Kingdoms of the World, ought to be left to its own Manner of Worship.

THE Magistrate has no Concern in these Cases further than a recom-

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mendatory Power, and the Influence of his own good Example. The glorious Guardianship of Liberty rests with him, and in the warm Wishes of every disinterested Man.

TIME and Experience have demonstrated the Vanity of attempting external Uniformity in Religion, by *coercive* Measures, and have pointed out the real Expedience of leaving that Door open. Time and Experience have led the State into a kind of Necessity of giving the Laity an *Independance*, as the *only* effectual Remedy to secure them from the Clergy's inconstant Conduct.

IN this View, a Repeal of our *exclusive Sanctions* wou'd be both just ; and further, seems preferable to withdrawing each injurious Law or Canon, one by one ; might be less obnoxious to popular Prejudice, and less

less attended with Envy. This glorious Point of Justice in the Legislature wou'd merit to be call'd with Propriety, THE PROTESTANT ACT.

FROM this great *Æra* Liberty wou'd date its full Establishment, and the Reformation her being render'd complete. Party and Animosity wou'd die out of the midst of us, and be extinguish'd together in one Day. Bigotry will wear away, and Superstition in all its Shapes grow asham'd. Religion will become rational, Society easy, the whole *British* State strong, peaceful, invincible.

F I N I S.

1871
This is to certify that the
above named person is
the owner of the land
herein described.

I am this day
advised that the
above named person
is the owner of the
land herein described
and he has
been duly
advised of the
same.



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